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ABSTRACT

This handbook is designed for student use in exploring the opportunities and challenges available in community colleges or four-year institutions. It could also be used by students interested in attending vocational-technical schools. The table of contents is designed as a checklist so that the booklet can be used as part of decision making. Part I focuses on choosing a school. Two chapters discuss three steps in defining one's choice and contents of a catalog or bulletin. Part II provides assistance in becoming familiar with the chosen college choice, its campus, its resources, and its regulations. Five chapters cover the admissions process, college calendar, resources on campus and in the community, and special student services. Part III gives steps to follow in planning an academic career. Four chapters discuss advising and academic planning, basic types of courses, scheduling, a year-long academic plan, and other resources needed. Part IV contains a final note and a glossary of terms in higher education. (YLB)

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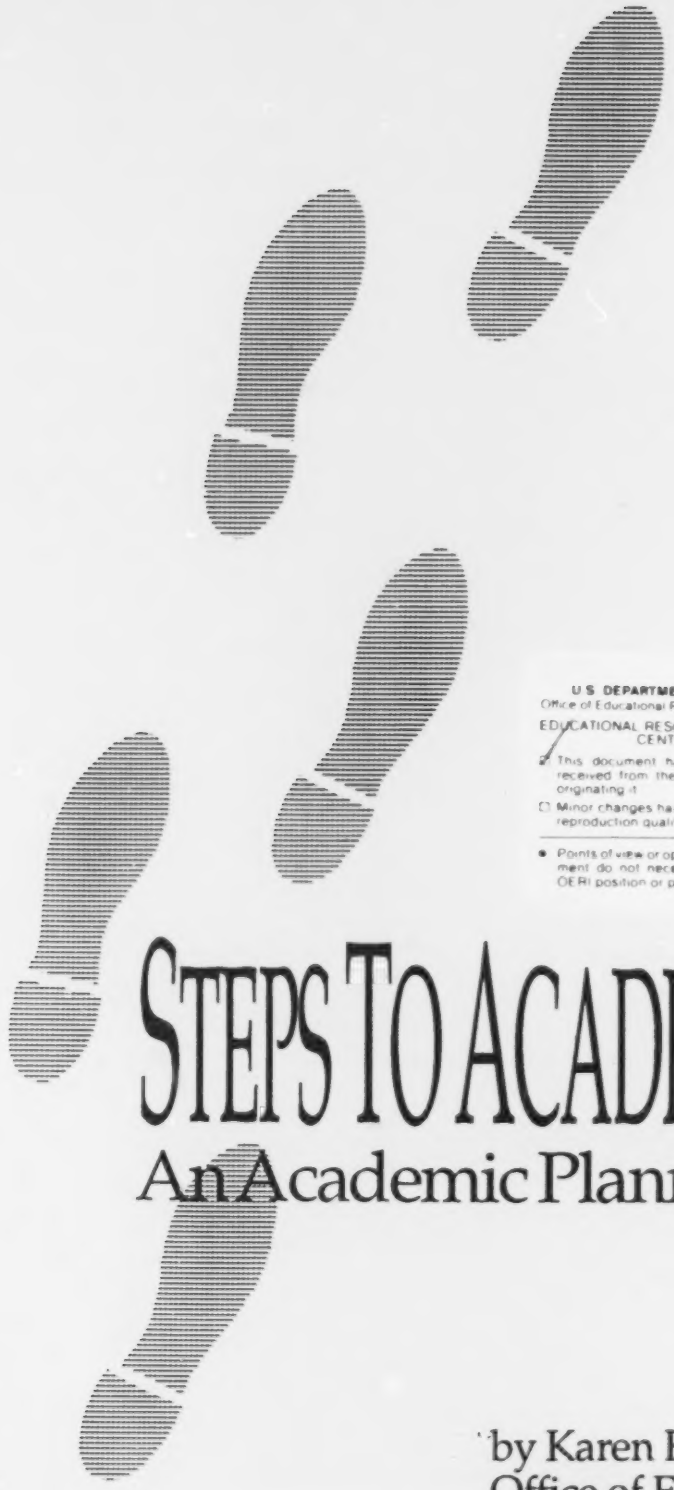

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STEPS TO ACADEMIC SUCCESS

An Academic Planning Handbook

by Karen Everett, Director
Office of Enrollment Management
Eastern Montana College

Funded under a special demonstration project for Teacher Training and Special Demonstration (Section 353) under the Adult Education Act.

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INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDENT

This handbook is designed for your use as you explore the opportunities and challenges available in higher education: community colleges or four-year institutions. While the word "college" appears often in the text, this handbook could be used by students interested in attending vocational-technical schools as well.

Here is the table of contents, designed as a checklist, so that you can use this booklet as part of your decision-making. This booklet isn't meant to be read from start to finish in one sitting: it is meant to be a guide for your journey to higher education. First, you can use Part I as you begin the process of choosing an institution. Then you can move on to Part II for assistance in becoming familiar with that choice, its campus, its resources, and its regulations. Finally, you can turn to Part III to give you steps to follow in planning your academic career. Part IV contains a final note and a glossary for you to use to familiarize yourself with terms in higher education.

Best wishes on your journey!

CHECKLIST FOR ACADEMIC SUCCESS

Check off the sections as you read them

PART I: CHOOSING A SCHOOL

- ☐ *Section 1:* Which School Do I Attend? 3
- ☐ *Section 2:* Guide to College Catalogs 4

PART II: GETTING TO KNOW YOUR CHOICE

- ☐ *Section 3:* The Admissions Process 5
- ☐ *Section 4:* College Calendar: what are the important dates? 6
- ☐ *Section 5:* Resources on Campus 7
- ☐ *Section 6:* Resources in the Community 8
- ☐ *Section 7:* Special Student Services 9

PART III: ACADEMIC PLANNING BEGINS

- ☐ *Section 8*: Advising and Academic Planning 10
- ☐ *Section 9:* Courses: what are the general types and what is best for me? 11
- ☐ *Section 10:* Scheduling 12
- ☐ *Section 11:* Year-long Academic Plan 13

PART IV: OTHER HELPFUL INFORMATION

- ☐ *Section 12:* Other Resources You Will Want to Gather 14

CONCLUSION

- ☐ *Section 13:* A Final Word 14

GLOSSARY OF TERMS 15

1. WHICH SCHOOL DO I ATTEND?

Three steps can help define your choice.

1) Career counseling can help you find out what your potential major might be. Career counseling can begin at the Adult Education Center and continues on the campus of the institution you decide to attend.

The career counseling can help narrow your focus and find the school suited to your purposes. For instance, if your counseling determines you have an interest/aptitude for nursing, you will want to consider colleges which offer that program.

In fact, as an adult learner considering the college track, you may want to consider setting a short-term goal like an associate degree (see GLOSSARY). The associate degree can be planned to fold into the bachelor degree (see GLOSSARY) but offers you a chance to "pat yourself on the back" for your achievement along the way.

2) Read about your college choice(s) in traditional college guidebooks, such as *The College Handbook* or *Peterson's Guide*. Especially if you are considering several choices, this step can give you a condensed overview of several colleges. Look for items that are important to you as a student:

- numbers of students (is it too big or too small?)
- accreditation status (see GLOSSARY)
- calendar (quarter or semester?)
- academic programs (which degrees or programs are offered?)
- academic requirements (what standards do you need to maintain as a student?)
- admission requirements (what do you need to get in?)
- student services (what resources are available to you as a student on campus?)
- expenses/fees (what will it cost per quarter or semester or year?)
- financial aid/scholarship aid (when and how do you apply?)
- location of the institution
- adult student services, activities, clubs
- child care
- other opportunities (what types of experiences outside of class does this institution offer? clubs related to your major? leadership development?)

3) Visit the campus(es) of your choice and take a campus tour. After you have gathered information from career counseling and college guidebooks, you are ready to see the campus. You are an experienced consumer — you need to see and touch and smell what you are getting into!

Call the Admissions Office of the college(s) of your choice and set up such a tour. Request a visit with a faculty or staff adviser in your area of interest so that you hear more about the academic commitment you will be making. Ask questions about the type of reparation you need to have for your program and that program's placement record. In other words, what kinds of jobs will you find with a degree in your proposed area of study? What salary range can you expect? Where will you have to go to get a job with that degree? What percentage of graduates find jobs in that field with a degree from that institution?

Request a visit with the adult student support office. Ask what types of support services you can expect from such an office and how you can apply to get those services. What other resources are available to you on campus?

Ask to meet with a financial aid representative to learn about the financial aid process. Establish a contact person in that office—copy down names and phone numbers —for future reference.

On the tour itself, inspect the campus setting. Is it accessible for your needs? Is the campus community friendly and welcoming? How do you **FEEL** about this place?

In short, be a good consumer. You will invest thousands of dollars and thousands of hours: make it a wise decision with as much information as you can gather.

A final piece of advice: **be prepared for change.** You cannot possibly anticipate all the choices, decisions, and challenges ahead. You will need to be flexible and adjust to what's ahead. **But prepare yourself as much as possible and know who to ask for help.**

Ask questions. Most institutions have a toll-free phone number: use it to get information as you need it.

NOTES OR QUESTIONS:

2. WHAT'S IN A CATALOG OR BULLETIN?

So you request information from an institution and you receive a catalog. (Some institutions call it a "bulletin.") How do you read it? How do you make sense of its contents?

Every catalog is different, but there are a few items that you should be able to locate and study so that you can make use of this document.

First, a catalog is not something you will ever read from cover-to-cover, but it is a document that is yours to use and study. Keep the catalog —it becomes your guide to the institution you choose to enter. If you will need more than four years to complete the bachelor degree (see GLOSSARY), you will want to find out the time limit or life-span of the catalog. How long will it be good for your use, or will you have to switch to a newer catalog in mid-stream?

Second, examine the arrangement of its contents and become familiar with its contents.

You will want to read about your **proposed major** (and minor if one is required). (See GLOSSARY for definitions of "major" and "minor.") Study the list of courses required for your program. Some catalogs contain plans of study, so you can see what a sample academic plan would look like.

Then turn to the part of catalog (usually the back) where the **courses** are described in detail. Here you will find what prerequisites (see GLOSSARY) the courses have and more information about the courses.

Find the listing of **general education courses or core requirements** (see GLOSSARY) that all students at that institution must take. Read the list and study the course descriptions.

Look up **Admissions** so that you know the steps you will go through to complete the process.

Find the **fee schedule** so you know how much it will cost you.

Page through the rest of the catalog to get an idea of the diversity of the campus and what it offers. You may find some interesting reading!

Remember the toll-free number. Make a list of your questions and call for more information as you need it. The Admissions Office is good place to start with your questions. If you cannot tour the campus, use your phone to gather as much information as you can.

NOTES OR QUESTIONS:

3. THE ADMISSIONS PROCESS... SCHOLARSHIP APPLICATIONS... FINANCIAL AID APPLICATION PROCESS

The paperwork begins with the **ADMISSION APPLICATION!** But remember that there are helpful people available to assist you.

When you have decided on where to apply, it is important that you **collect the necessary forms** and begin the process. All the post-secondary institutions in Montana use the same admission application form, but each requires an admission fee to accompany the application. So you want to "narrow" the field before you start the application process!

You will need to have an application on file with most campuses before you will be considered for **financial aid.** So the application is really the first step.

Also, be aware that the application for **admission** comes before the **scholarship** application process for many campuses. That is, you will need to have an application on file before you will be considered for scholarship assistance.

Read the **application instructions** carefully to know what is required of you. At a very minimum, you will have to have your **high school transcript or GED scores** sent to the campus of your choice or with your application.

Immunization rules now require that any student born after December 31, 1956, must show proof of immunization administered after December 31, 1967, against measles and rubella. A physician's record, health agency, or school record is acceptable evidence.

SCHOLARSHIP APPLICATIONS vary from school to school, but you should ask for the necessary forms and find out about deadlines. Some schools now have scholarship funds dedicated to adult students.

Ask about the **criteria** for selection for scholarships. Are the scholarships renewable automatically or do you have to reapply each year? What academic performance will be required of you to compete for scholarships each year?

Don't overlook the **scholarship opportunities** on your campus. First of all, meeting the criteria for scholarships is a good goal to set for yourself. Second, even if the scholarship assistance you get is small, it is a recognition of your effort and skills!

FINANCIAL AID APPLICATION follows quickly on the heels of the admissions application process. As stated above, you need an application for admissions on file to complete the financial aid application process, but both processes should begin as early as possible. **Know the priority date for applying at the institution of your choice, and meet that date!**

Finances and child care are two major concerns for adult learners: to get the maximum consideration for financial aid, know your school's priority date and meet it!

As stated above in the section entitled "Which School Do I Attend?" you should tour the campus(es) of your choice and ask to meet with financial aid staff. This meeting will help define the process for you, and you can pick up the necessary forms. You will also get the name of a contact person so that you have someone to call with questions.

There are **three basic types of forms for financial aid application:** the Financial Aid Form (FAF), Application for Federal Student Aid (AFSA), and American College Testing (ACT). You should check with the institution of your choice to find out which is preferred. Each institution may also have a student data information form or other individual forms you will need to fill out. Collect everything!

Thorough and accurate completion of the proper form will assure your financial aid application of prompt attention. Again, remember to find out the priority dates for the application process so that you can get the maximum amount of funding you are entitled to receive. Pick up a booklet at the Financial Aid Office which details the various forms of assistance available: grants, loans, work-study (which are part-time jobs available on campus). Work-study jobs can be arranged around your class schedule.

The financial aid office may also offer **part-time employment** opportunities found in the community. Is there a job board where you can find a list of jobs available? If you do not qualify for work-study, you may find a job elsewhere with the assistance of an on-campus job service.

Again, **ask questions** and **follow-up** with both the admissions office and the financial aid office to make certain that you have all the records you need on file. Use the toll-free number if one is available.

4. THE COLLEGE CALENDAR: WHAT ARE THE IMPORTANT DATES?

Look at an **academic calendar.** Notice the important dates. Here are a few to remember to mark as important for you:

Orientation	What will you learn there? when is it? where is it? what does it cost?
Fee collection	When? where? can you pick up financial aid there?
Classes begin	Mark this date on all calendars in red!
Late registration fee applies	If you start classes late, you pay more.
Last day for dropping or adding courses for credit	Up to this point you can still change your schedule by dropping classes and adding other classes.
Last day to drop courses	This is the last day you can drop a course. Depending on the date, you may or may not get a refund.
Pre-registration	Just as soon as you get settled into your courses, you need to be thinking about next quarter or semester. Make an appointment with your adviser and begin studying your academic program so that you can plan ahead.
Financial aid priority date	Financial aid applications are filed every year for the following year's funding. Be aware of deadlines and put them on your calendar. Mark your calendar to pick up forms and get them submitted early!
Scholarship deadlines	Most scholarships require a new application each year. Get the dates on your calendar and remember to get the forms filled out early.
Withdrawal	Hopefully, you will not need to withdraw! But if circumstances occur which prevent you from completing your coursework, complete the necessary paper work at the Registrar's Office to officially withdraw. Familiarize yourself with the option to withdraw and the deadlines, just in case!
Deadline Final exam week	Dates and times for final exams are important! The final exam schedule is often different from your regular class schedule, so plan ahead for these blocks of time so that you can re-arrange your work schedule or other schedules. Professors are unlikely to change or adapt their final exam to your schedule!
Holidays!	Look ahead and look forward to the holidays that appear on the college calendar.

OTHER IMPORTANT DATES:

5. RESOURCES ON CAMPUS: WHERE CAN I GET EXTRA HELP?

Activities: Even though you are in school to study, you still need time to relax, meet new friends, and enjoy your campus. Clubs, activities, and student government offer you these opportunities. Getting involved in your campus' student activities creates a sense of "ownership": you feel like you belong and have a stake in things!

Career Services/Campus Testing/Placement: Offices with names like "Career Services" offer career information and counseling to assist you with your career choice after you become a student. A testing facility will offer career interest tests as well as pre-professional skills tests or tests required by certain degrees. As a wise consumer, you will also want to become familiar with services offered by the campus placement office. The placement office helps you find a job after graduation, but the process begins much earlier than your graduation date. The placement office may hold seminars, workshops, job fairs, etc., that you could attend while you are a student, preparing for the day when you are a graduate.

Child Care: Ask about child care/day-care facilities on campus or close to the campus.

Departmental Offices: If you have a major and/or minor, get to know the departmental secretary and the chair. The departmental office may have computers for its students to use or part-time jobs for its majors or just simply be a good support for its students.

Financial Aid: Make sure you are acquainted with the services your financial aid office will provide for you. Mark important financial aid dates on your calendar.

Labs: Math, English, and foreign languages often have labs of their own to offer assistance to students in those areas. A Math Lab, for instance, will typically offer extra help to students from remedial courses up through the first level of college math. An English or Writing Lab can help students with papers from English classes or students who need assistance with writing skills in general. This office may also offer students the opportunity to learn word processing.

Student Services or Student Affairs Offices: All campuses have offices specifically devoted to student services or affairs. These offices may help you answer questions as well. These offices may be headed by a director, a dean, or a vice president but will assist you in getting the information you need. Don't hesitate to ask!

Student Support Services or Student Opportunity Services: Even though these offices come with different names, many campuses have a special place which offers services to adult students returning to school. These services could include tutoring, supplemental instruction (special tutoring combined with a regular academic subject), support groups, advising assistance, etc. Some of the services may be available to all students; for other services you may have to meet certain criteria. But find the support network that exists for adult students. On page 9, you will find a list of federally-funded support services for adults on Montana college campuses.

Student Health Service: Most campuses have a center providing immediate care to students. Criteria for service may include the number of credits you carry, but you will want to know where and when this care is available.

Student Grievance Officer: Campuses typically have a grievance or student complaint process that may include such an officer. Each campus' process is usually outlined in the campus catalog.

Veterans' Office: Many campuses will have a separate staff person assigned to helping veterans secure their educational benefits.

OTHER CAMPUS RESOURCES:

6. RESOURCES IN THE COMMUNITY: OTHER GROUPS THAT PROVIDE ASSISTANCE

In Billings, the District 7 Human Resources Development Council has published a helpful guide to our community resources called *Ask Directory*. It contains agency addresses, phone numbers, hours, services, eligibility, and costs. Your campus student support services office may have a similar guide to your local resources.

As you explore the resources available in your community, you will create your own list of support services. To get you thinking about what may be available to you, here is a sample (by no means exhaustive) list of resources you might want to know in your area:

Adult Education Center
Big Brothers and Sisters
Bureau of Indian Affairs
Catholic Social Service
Chamber of Commerce
Chemical Dependency Center
Community Center
Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program (EFNEP)
Family Services
Food Bank
Foster Grandparent Program
Goodwill Industries
Head Start
Housing Authority
Indian Health Board
Job Corps
Job Service
Low-Income Energy Assistance Program-LIEAP
Lutheran Social Service
March of Dimes
Mental Health Center
Montana Independent Living Project
Saint Vincent DePaul Society
Salvation Army
Social Security
Social and Rehabilitation Services
Travelers Aid Veterans Affairs
WIC Food Program

OTHER COMMUNITY RESOURCES:

7. SPECIAL STUDENT SERVICES FOR ADULT LEARNERS IN MONTANA

At several of Montana's two- and four-year institutions, student support services are available to assist adult learners. These federally-funded offices may have an application process for students to receive their services. Schools not listed below may have special assistance for adults; check the school's catalog for office names/phone numbers. Here is the most recent listing of federally-funded programs in Montana:

Blackfeet Community College
Student Support Services
P.O. Box 819
Browning, MT 59417
Tailfeathers, Mr. Bob
406-338-5441

College of Great Falls
Student Support Services
1301 20th Street South
Great Falls, MT 59405
Gretch, Mr. Dick
406-761-8210

Dawson Community College
Special Services
P.O. Box 421
Glendive, MT 59330
Garcia, Ms. Florence
406-365-5928

Dull Knife Memorial College
Student Support Services
Box 98
Lame Deer, MT 59043
Lone Bear, Ms. Juanita
406-477-6215

Eastern Montana College
SOS (Student Opportunity Services)
1500 North 30th Street
Billings, MT 59101
406-657-2162

Flathead Valley Community College
ARC (Academic Reinforcement Center)
P. O. Box 1174
Kalispell, MT 59901
Farris, Ms. Lynn
406-752-5222

Montana State University
ABC (Advance By Choice)
SUB 143
Bozeman, MT 59717
Lukin, Ms. Mary
406-994-4541

Northern Montana College
Student Support Services
213 Cowan Hall
Havre, MT 59501
Rosette, Ms. Pam
406-265-3783

Rocky Mountain College
Services for Academic Success
1511 Poly Drive
Billings, MT 59102
Maas, Mrs. Darlene
406-657-1070

Salish Kootenai College
Student Support Services
P.O. Box 117
Pablo, MT 59855
Slater, Jerry (Acting Director)
406-675-4800

University of Montana
Student Support Services
135 Carbine Hall
Missoula, MT 59812-3569
Carlisle, Mr. Raymond
406-243-5033

OTHER ADULT LEARNER SERVICES:

8. ADVISING AND ACADEMIC PLANNING

What is academic planning?

You are encouraged to meet with an adviser for assistance in planning coursework. An adviser is faculty or staff who knows your area of interest and can guide your choice of classes to fulfill your academic goals. Your adviser assists you in learning college regulations and urges you to use campus resources to enhance your education. In short, an adviser is a helpful person to get to know!

Where do I find an adviser?

If you have a major, call that department or area for an adviser.

If you are undecided as to a major, you can work with a general adviser or some staff person dedicated to working with students who have not decided on a major. That person will assist you in coursework planning as well as answer your other curricular questions until you decide on a major.

Changing a major usually requires that you notify the Registrar.

If you have previously attended college, you need to make an appointment with the appropriate adviser for an evaluation of credits. This adviser can assess previous coursework and assist you in planning your future coursework.

Visiting regularly with your adviser can help you succeed. Consider this booklet as your invitation to meet your adviser. Use this booklet to prepare for that appointment. The following Advising Checklist can become your guide to effective academic planning:

ADVISING CHECKLIST

☐ 1) Check the list of courses you need to take—your major, your minor if you have one, and general education requirements, as well as requirements for your chosen major or program (i.e., teacher education).

☐ 2) Make a list of courses you would like to take each quarter or semester. Always pick a few extras in case a course has filled by the time you register. Check prerequisites of courses you want to take.

☐ 3) Stop in or call the department of your major or your assigned adviser and make an appointment to see your adviser. (If you do not have an adviser, call the Registrar's Office and ask for one in your area.)

☐ 4) When you have your appointment to see your adviser, take this handbook, your catalog, and your list of courses with you. If your adviser does not have electronic access to your academic records, get a working copy of any previous coursework and take it with you to your appointment.

☐ 5) With an approved list of courses from your adviser, make out a schedule. You may have other questions about academic regulations or career opportunities in your field or general questions about the school to ask your adviser—make a list before you go so that you can get all your questions answered.

☐ 6) Check the school calendar to find out which day pre-registration begins and your appropriate day to register.

☐ 7) Learn about the registration process and get the forms or phone numbers that you need, well in advance of the deadlines so you can get your questions answered.

☐ 8) Register as early as you can in order to get the courses you want!

☐ 9) Keep in touch with your adviser —and talk to your instructors. You will find that all of these people will answer your questions and that they welcome student contact!

NOTES OR QUESTIONS:

9. COURSES: WHAT ARE THE GENERAL TYPES AND WHAT IS BEST FOR ME?

WHAT ARE THE DIFFERENT TYPES OF COURSES?

The three basic types of courses are the constant discipline courses, the lecture-discussion courses, and the interactive courses.

THE CONSTANT DISCIPLINE COURSES

Mathematics; English composition, foreign languages, shorthand, accounting and science courses fall into this category.

The coursework in these classes builds on previous class assignments. In order to understand the material, you must attend class regularly, complete your written assignments and study daily.

Your Goals:

- Use class pressure positively. Stay in control from start to finish.
- Complete the class assignments daily.
- Work with your professor to solve problems before they become serious.
- Be aware of your progress by keeping track of your lab work, tests, quizzes, and your written assignments.

LECTURE-DISCUSSION COURSES

These courses include literature, business, history, economics, sociology, psychology and health. The class is based upon lectures and requires you to do outside reading. The number of tests may vary, and often your final grade is based on the total of two or three exams.

Your Goals:

- Attend class daily and participate in class discussion.
- Take complete notes and organize handouts.
- Keep up with the reading assignments.
- Save returned tests and correct your mistakes.

INTERACTIVE COURSES

These courses require active participation and include art, music, drama, speech, and physical education. There is strong emphasis on individual study and self-paced learning. There are usually few tests, and a large portion of your grade is determined by your attendance and your involvement with the material.

Your Goals:

- Check the course syllabus to find out what is expected of you. If you have any problems, talk to the professor immediately.
- Participate in the class even if you are nervous. Your apprehension will fade as you get involved.

WORKING AND ATTENDING COLLEGE

Studies have shown it is often difficult for students to balance work with college attendance, and the challenge is compounded for students with family and/or job responsibilities.

If you are enrolled with a full-time schedule, we recommend that you work no more than 20 hours per week. If you are working full-time and taking evening courses we advise that you attempt only two courses. As you continue your education, you may feel that you can handle heavier credit loads. (See GLOSSARY for a definition of "credit.")

How many credit hours should YOU take?

Because each student differs in activities and abilities, the number of credits that may be attempted will also vary. You, the student, are the only person who can really decide how many credits you can handle.

Factors to include in your decision should be how well you have prepared yourself for college, how many hours you plan to work or devote to activities, your family life-style, and your motivation level.

Trouble can also occur if you are taking too light a course load and decide to drop a class. Students enrolled for the minimum full-time load often find that dropping a class will not enable them to maintain their eligibility in federal financial aid programs or scholarships.

BALANCING

This word becomes the key: balancing. You need to balance different types of courses (constant discipline, lecture-discussion, interactive) you take each term. You want some of each, not all one type. When you decide on a major, you will want to balance general education courses with courses in your major. You want to balance your work and family responsibilities with those of school. BALANCING: use your ADVISER for assistance.

NOTES OR QUESTIONS:

10. SCHEDULING

Each institution has its own time schedule, but one of the early lessons we all learn is time management! You need to schedule enough time to accomplish your goals, and that includes class-time, study-time, and your personal time.

On the schedule sheet below, sketch in your classes and then add study-time. Remember that for every hour spent in class, instructors may expect up to three hours out of class for homework. Sometimes it's more, sometimes less. But be prepared by learning to schedule your study-time.

MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY

11. YEAR-LONG ACADEMIC PLAN

Once you become familiar with academic requirements, you will want to plan ahead. Here is a format for planning a few years of quarter or semester work. Some classes come in sequences, so it pays to plan to take them in the proper order. Other classes have prerequisites, and you will want to schedule them first.

Use the format that fits the institution you will attend.

QUARTER SYSTEM

FALL 19 ____	CR	WINTER 19 ____	CR	SPRING 19 ____	CR	SUMMER 19 ____	CR

FALL 19 ____	CR	WINTER 19 ____	CR	SPRING 19 ____	CR	SUMMER 19 ____	CR

SEMESTER SYSTEM

FALL 19 ____	CR	SPRING 19 ____	CR	SUMMER 19 ____	CR

FALL 19 ____	CR	SPRING 19 ____	CR	SUMMER 19 ____	CR

12. OTHER RESOURCES YOU WILL NEED

Three pieces of paper need to be added to this booklet in order to give you a more complete survival kit.

First of all, you need to get a campus map that you can read and understand.

Second, you need a list of general education or core classes that you can use as you and your adviser plan your classes. The list may be in the catalog. These lists are essential to keep so you and your adviser can check off which of these classes you have completed and which you have yet to take.

Third, if you have a major, your adviser may give you a list of requirements for that major. Along the way, if required, you will also get a list of required courses for your minor. These sheets may remain on file with your adviser, but you may also want a copy for your academic records.

13. A FINAL WORD

This booklet is about preparing and planning for your continuing education. These words and pages can help you organize this endeavor and meet the challenge.

At your adult education center, you are learning important skills and gaining academic strength. Your adult education center is giving you both the skills and the confidence you need to succeed in higher education.

But **you** are the vital ingredient. Your determination and your sacrifices will help make your dream a reality. Your family may also play an important role in meeting this challenge. You will also meet other adult students who will form a support group around you —adults on campus form their own groups of support: you will meet them and receive assistance from them as well.

I hope that this booklet can begin to provide you with the confidence and the know-how to begin this important journey. I am certain that on every campus you will find caring, helpful professionals who will help you along the way.

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

As you begin your investigation into higher education, you may want to familiarize yourself with some words or terms.

Academic Year: That time from the opening of Fall Quarter (or Semester) to the closing of the next Spring Quarter (or Semester) is the "academic year." Summer Session is excluded.

Accredited Institution: An institution of higher education is accredited by or a candidate for accreditation from one of the recognized regional accrediting commissions: New England Association of Schools and Colleges, Middle States Association of Colleges and Schools, Northwest Association of Schools and Colleges, Southern Association of Colleges and Schools, and the Western Association of Schools and Colleges. Accreditation by one of these regional associations is a "stamp of approval" and your assurance of quality.

Admission: A process which formally enables potential students to attend an institution. To apply, students fill out forms obtained from counselors or the institution's admissions office. A fee is usually assessed for this application process.

Advising: A service provided by a faculty or designated person (adviser) in any school which guides students through academic questions, problems, and/or coursework to plan and complete a degree program.

Arts and Sciences or Liberal Arts: Subjects used traditionally to teach students to think, to evaluate ideas, and to communicate with precision. Departments may include Art; Biological Sciences; Communication Arts; English; Foreign Languages and Literatures; History; Mathematics; Music; Physical Sciences (chemistry, earth sciences and physics); Philosophy, Humanities, and Religious Studies; Psychology; and Sociology, Political Science and Native American Studies.

Associate Degree: A degree which generally requires two years of full-time attendance to complete. Under the quarter system, this degree may have as many as 96 credits; under semesters, 64 credits.

Bachelor Degree: A degree which, in general, requires four years to complete. The degree certifies that an individual has completed a full program of college study. A Bachelor of Arts degree may require two years of a foreign language; requirements for Bachelor of Science degrees are generally determined by individual schools. A Bachelor of Science degree m ay also require more math or science than a Bachelor of Arts degree. Each institution sets its own requirements. Under the quarter system, this degree may have as many as 192 credits; under semesters, 128 credits.

Business and Economics: This area includes subjects which apply to the business world including Accounting, Business Data Processing, Business Economics, Economics, Finance, General Business Administration, Information Systems, Management, Marketing, Word Processing.

Candidacy for a Degree: A status a student assumes when he or she has completed all requirements for a degree and applies for graduation. The application process takes place at the Registrar's Office.

Class Schedule: The list of courses and sections offered in a given quarter (or semester), including days, hours, places of meeting, and names of instructors.

Classification of Students: Each institution will rank its students' standing by credits, quarter or semester. Consult the catalog of the institution you will attend to find out how many credits you need to be a sophomore or junior or senior.

Core Courses: see General Education Requirements

Corequisite: A course required to be taken at the same time as another course.

Course: A unit of academic work in a particular subject, normally one quarter (or semester) long, at the end of which a student receives a grade.

Course Load: The number of quarter (or semester) credit hours associated with the academic work in which a student is enrolled in any given term.

Credit hours: Normally a credit hour represents 50 minutes of classroom instruction each week for one quarter. Thus, a three-credit course will meet for three 50-minute or two 75-minute sessions each week.

Degree: An academic rank an institution is authorized to confer as official recognition to those who complete an academic program. An example is a Bachelor of Science Degree.

Degree Program: A prescribed course of study which leads to a degree.

Double Counting: The process by which some courses may be used to meet both general education or core requirements as well as requirements for a degree. However, the credits may not be counted twice. See your adviser for assistance.

Education: This area involves work which will enable students to teach in elementary or secondary schools in most areas of arts and sciences; health or physical education; and related subjects. An institution may also offer degrees in special education.

Electives: Courses which are not a part of a degree program are electives. Some departments may require certain electives for their majors.

Extended Major: Some departments offer majors by which students may incorporate the credit hours of major and minor into an extended major for a greater concentration of one subject matter. A minor is not required in an extended major.

Faculty Adviser: A faculty member who helps a student plan and complete a degree program.

Full-time Student: An undergraduate student registered for 12 or more quarter (or semester) credit hours, or any graduate student registered for nine or more quarter credit hours is considered a full-time student.

General Education Requirements or Core Courses: Courses required of all students, regardless of major, because they introduce students to a variety of ideas and skills to strengthen and deepen the students' education.

Grade Point Average (GPA): The average grade a student earns for each credit. It is calculated by multiplying the number of credits given for a course times the value of the grade received for the course (A=4, B=3, C=2, D=1, F=0), adding the value calculated for each class and dividing by the total number of credits. Thus, if a student has received an A in a 5 credit course; an A in a 4 credit course; a B in a 3-credit course; and a C in a 2-credit course, the GPA calculation would be as follows:

A=4 times 5 credits=20 grade points

A=4 times 4 credits=16 grade points

B=3 times 3 credits= 9 grade points

C=2 times 3 credits= 6 grade points

Total =15 credits=51 grade points

51 grade points divided by 15 total credits =3.4 GPA.

Graduation Procedures: It is never too early to study the steps you need to go through to register for graduation. Find out from your catalog what the requirements are and ask questions early!

Hours: Quarter (or semester) credit hours unless specifically stated otherwise. Since there are three quarters in an academic year at a quarter-system institution and only two semesters at institutions which operate under that system, one semester credit hour usually works out to be the approximate equivalent of one and one-half quarter hours.

Laboratory: A course involving supervised experimentation or practice related to an academic area. It generally requires hands-on use of equipment and materials.

Liberal Arts: see Arts and Sciences

Lower Division: Classes usually numbered 100 to 299. Ordinarily freshmen take courses numbered from 100 to 199; sophomores from 200 to 299.

Major: The area in which a student concentrates. An academic major is required for graduation.

Minor: An area in addition to the major in which students concentrate their efforts, but to a lesser degree than in a major.

Montana University System: The six state-supported universities and colleges as well as the vocational-technical centers in Montana form the Montana University System under the day-to-day administration of the Commissioner of Higher Education and the overall direction of the Montana Board of Regents of Higher Education.

Multicultural Study: A general term for courses which involve students in a culture other than the mainstream American experience.

Option: A choice by which students narrow their area of specialty within the overall umbrella of their degree program. For instance, a student may have a Communication Arts major with a Theatre Arts option.

Pass-Withdrawal Grading: Some institutions offer students Pass-Withdrawal as a way of taking classes without fear of failure. Students who do A, B, or C work in the class are given a P; students who do D or F work earn a W. It is intended to encourage students to explore courses outside of their major and minor programs. There is no affect on Grade Point Average.

Prerequisite: A course to be completed successfully or a condition to be met before a student may enroll in a specific course.

Probation: Each institution sets its own requirements for maintaining a minimum grade point average for academic as well as financial aid satisfactory progress. Your GPA can affect not only your academic standing (whether you can continue classes or not), but also your financial aid. Therefore, familiarize yourself with the academic and financial aid probation policies.

Quarter: An enrollment period of about ten weeks. Most courses are completed in one quarter. The dates of each quarter are shown on the institution's calendar.

Registration: The process by which students officially enroll in classes and pay fees. To register, students must have been officially admitted. Students should check the institution's calendar for the earliest possible dates for registration.

Schedule: For any given quarter (or semester), the list of classes for which a student registers, together with course and section numbers, hours, and days of meeting, places of instruction, and instructors. The schedule form may also include the name of the student's adviser, address, and phone. Any changes in this information should be reported to the Registrar.

Semester: An enrollment period of 17 weeks. Most courses would be completed within that time period.

Transcript: A copy of a student's permanent academic record on file at the Registrar's Office.

Undergraduate Student: A student who has not yet earned a bachelor degree.

Upper Division: Courses generally numbered from 300 to 499. Ordinarily juniors takes courses numbered from 300 to 399; seniors from 400 to 499.